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How the Past Becomes A Place: An Example from 19th-Century Maryland

Cover Page Footnote

Archaeological investigations at the Susquehanna site were funded by the Edison Institute of the Henry Ford Museum and the Maryland Historical Trust. The Patuxent River Naval Air Station, present owner of the Susquehanna property, granted permission for the investigations. Doug Lister and Kyle Rambo of NAS Patuxent River provided logistical support for the project. Many of the ideas presented in this paper were developed during the course of a residential fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks and in conversations with Mary C. Beaudry; Marley R. Brown, III; Edward E. Chaney; Julie Earnstein; Iris Carter Ford; Andrea G. Hammer; and Jessica Baugher, Terry Klein, and George Miller for the invitation to participate in this collection of papers.

How the Past Becomes A Place: An Example from 19th-Century Maryland

Julia A. King

This paper examines how certain landscapes were remade as places important in the collective memory in 19th-century America. Specifically, archaeological, documentary, and literary evidence are used to show how Susquehanna, a 19th-century tobacco and wheat farm in St. Mary's County, Maryland was reconfigured as a place important in the state's past. By imagining Susquehanna and the region in which it was located as a place in time, many upper and middle class Marylanders were able to reconcile the growing differences between the southern and northern parts of the state. The actions of these 19th-century men and women are not unrelated to our own work as archaeologists, especially as we draw lines around archaeological sites and transform them into special places based on ideas of significance.

Cet article examine comment certains paysages ont été refaits comme des endroits ayant une importance dans la mémoire collective de l'Amérique du XIXe siècle. En particulier, les preuves archéologiques, documentaires et littéraires sont utilisées pour démontrer comment Susquehanna, une ferme d'exploitation de tabac et de blé dans le comté de St. Mary dans le Maryland, a été réaménagée comme endroit ayant une importance particulière dans le passé de l'état. En imaginant Susquehanna et la région dans laquelle elle était située dans le temps, plusieurs habitants du Maryland des classes moyenne et supérieure étaient capables de réconcilier les différences grandissantes entre les secteurs sud et nord de l'état. Les gestes posés par ces hommes et ces femmes du XIXe siècle sont en rapport avec notre propre travail en tant qu'archéologues, particulièrement alors que nous dessinons les contours des sites archéologiques et les transformons en endroits qui revêtent une signification particulière.

Introduction

One purpose of this volume is to increase discussion of 19th-century farmsteads in the eastern United States and Canada. What can we learn from these seemingly ubiquitous sites, and how do we determine the significance of 19th-century farmsteads? Which sites should be afforded protection through the cultural resource management process? These are challenging questions to consider and, indeed, a great deal of discussion is needed before archaeologists will reach any kind of consensus.

In this paper, I explore how everyday sites became remade as historic places in 19th-century America. I use archaeological, documentary, and literary evidence to show how a 19th-century farmstead in southern Maryland became widely recognized as an important historic site in the decades before the Civil War. This analysis has important implications for understanding our own present-day efforts to determine which 19th-century sites should be considered significant.

James Duncan (1993) has suggested that, during the 19th century, the phenomenon of "spatializing temporality," that is, representing the past as a geographical site, became one way of explaining and understanding cultural difference. It was during the 19th century that modern attitudes toward the temporal process were emerging and the idea of progress, or "perpetual social advance," was becoming a "primary dogma" of the period (Buckley 1966: 1-41). As "progress" seemingly brought about rapid technological and social changes, those people "ignored" by progress and the places they inhabited were transformed into sites ranked along a temporal continuum. These landscapes were understood to represent a kind of 'past' in the present. With increasing geographical mobility and the rise of tourism in 19th-century America, these transformed landscapes became places where an imagined past was used to negotiate American identity (Sears 1989: 3-4).

I focus on this phenomenon as it was manifested in the 19th-century Chesapeake landscape. Specifically, I am interested in the

transformation of ordinary, everyday landscapes into historically meaningful places in the decades preceding the American Civil War: sacred sites people experienced, commemorated, represented, and imagined for their historical associations. During the antebellum era, landscape became an important vehicle for representing the colonial and Revolutionary past. Many landscapes associated with colonial and Revolutionary events were demarcated, bounded, and increasingly removed from the experiences of everyday life. These landscapes became "places in time" and were the focus of considerable regional and even national attention during the 19th century.

This sensibility is important to understand because it continues to inform our contemporary sense of how historic sites are understood. So basic is this sensibility to our understanding of historic places that today we often describe visits to historic sites as "stepping back in time," "places forgotten by time," or "the place where time began." These "places in time" evoke more simple, more authentic places where the social and psychological pressures of modernity are absent, places to which modern men and women can escape and "re-create." They evoke the sense of an authentic "lost community" before the homogenization and alienation of the world.

These metaphors are more than clever gimmicks for the promotion of heritage tourism. Concepts of authenticity, for example, inform decisions about the archaeological significance of 19th-century farmsteads. So-called disturbed 19th-century archaeological sites might be "written off" when, in fact, this disturbance could be relevant for understanding the changing uses of farmstead sites. Assumptions about progress, modernization, and folk or traditional culture underpin much archaeological analysis, fostering the creation of seemingly mutually exclusive, unproblematic cultural categories (cf. Cabak, Groover, and Inkrot 1999).

The sense that time could (and can) be represented as a place is part of the larger cultural process of modernization. Modernization—the emergence of capitalism, the market, consumerism, and commodification—changed

how people experience time and space (Harvey 1990: 201–283). Technological innovations have dramatically altered the speed of communication, collapsing old boundaries of time and space, and forging new ones. One of these new boundaries identifies and separates the "modern" world of capitalism from the "traditional" world of community. The modern world is viewed as one of cultural homogeneity while the traditional world is one of cultural difference. This difference is often represented along a temporal scale, and geographical or cultural difference becomes converted into temporal difference. The traditional world was authentic, rooted in history, and outside of and in opposition to the modern world. During the 19th century, especially, the past came to be understood as a geographical site (O'Brien and Roseberry 1989: 1–18; Duncan 1993; Boyarin 1994).

The widespread emergence of this sensibility during the 19th century and the corresponding shift in cultural attitudes about time and the past have received relatively little attention from historical archaeologists. Exceptions include Anne Yentsch's (1988) discussion of houses, legends, and what she calls mytho-history, and James Baker's (1992) exploration of the larger-than-life role of the Plymouth Pilgrims in 19th-century national mythology.¹ In this paper, I examine how the Susquehanna Farm, an antebellum tobacco and wheat plantation in Maryland, was reconfigured as a place in the past, and how antebellum Americans used landscape to create their colonial past. An understanding of how this place was transformed provides insight for how we create our more recent past with every 19th-century farmstead we choose to preserve today.

Susquehanna Farm

The issues summarized in the introduction became apparent to me during an archaeological study of Susquehanna, a well known tobacco and wheat plantation located at the

¹ Paul Shackel (1996: 174–175) suggested that a kind of nostalgia for more simple times (or, in Shackel's words, "the good old days") can explain domestic ceramic assemblages recovered from Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Shackel's conclusions, however, do not appear to be supported by his data (Landon 1998: 66–69).

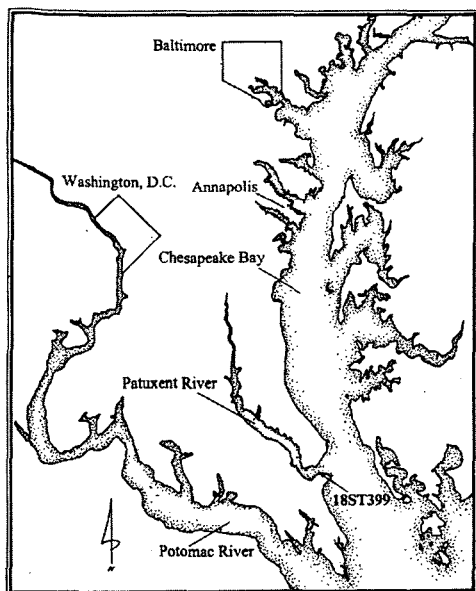


Figure 1. Location of the Susquehanna Farm (18ST399), Maryland.

mouth of the Patuxent River in St. Mary's County, Maryland (FIG. 1). In the decades preceding the Civil War, Susquehanna had been a well-managed farm with one of the largest slave labor forces in the region. The farm's owner, Henry J. Carroll, was reform-minded, practicing soil conservation, crop diversification, and experimenting with innovative agricultural implements. Susquehanna stood in stark contrast to the antebellum stereotype of the exhausted, dilapidated tobacco plantation and yet, Susquehanna's fame in the 19th century had little to do with its reform-minded farming practices.

Instead, 19th-century Susquehanna was associated with one of the great stories of early Maryland history: the murder in 1684 of Christopher Rousby, the King's tax collector and the subsequent capture and daring escape of his killer, Colonel George Talbot, a cousin and agent of Lord Baltimore's, the Maryland Proprietor. On the eve of the Civil War, this story was widely told throughout Maryland and the mid-Atlantic region. Indeed, this "legend of Maryland," as it came to be known, had been published in the *Baltimore Patriot*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. The tale remained a vibrant part of local Maryland lore well into the first half of

the 20th century. In this story, Susquehanna—where Rousby lived and was murdered in the 17th century—was portrayed as a kind of 'place in time,' a representation in striking contrast with other contemporary antebellum observations of the landscape and the tobacco economy of southern Maryland and neighboring Virginia.

This 'temporalization of space,' at least in Maryland, may have functioned to resolve contradictions between northern and southern Maryland. "No American state," historian Robert J. Brugger (1988: 187) claims, "portrayed as vividly as did Maryland [in the years following the War of 1812] the contrast between slave and steam power, past and future, convention and change." Barbara Jeanne Fields (1985) writes of "two Marylands," one fueled by economic and industrial expansion, the other clinging to a traditional colonial economy based on tobacco. In no other region of the United States did a slave economy coexist so closely with an economy increasingly dependent on manufactures and the opening of western markets. This geographical contradiction was resolved not by pointing out the modern farming practices at plantations like Susquehanna, but rather by remaking southern Maryland as a place in history.

The Murder of Christopher Rousby

Christopher Rousby, a lawyer by trade, had immigrated to Maryland around 1666, taking up residence at the mouth of the Patuxent River in what is now St. Mary's County. He served in a number of political offices while in Maryland, but he became most famous for his position as the King's Collector for the Patuxent. Appointed to this position in 1676, Rousby collected royal duties from merchant ships entering the Patuxent. Rousby had been recommended for the position by the colony's proprietor, Lord Baltimore, but it was not long before he was in open conflict with Baltimore.

As Baltimore began lobbying for Rousby's removal, a deep personal animosity developed between the two men. On one occasion, Rousby called Baltimore a "Traitor to his face, and his Lordship Offering to speake again Mr.

Rousby told him he had best hold his tongue." For his part, Baltimore called Rousby "Evill," a "Devill," and "the most lewd, debauched swearing and most prophane Fellow in the whole Government and indeed not fit to be admitted into Civill society" (Semmes 1979: 173; Archives of Maryland [Archives] 1885a: 274–275). The Board of Trade eventually fined Baltimore for his treatment of Rousby, directing the men to work out any future disputes before complaining to royal authorities. In 1684, Baltimore was forced to return to England to defend his charter against William Penn. Soon after Baltimore's departure, Captain Thomas Allen of the Royal Navy arrived in the colony aboard the *Quaker*. Allen soon proceeded to act with an "insolent carriage," mocking the populace for their loyalty to Lord Baltimore. One evening in late October, 1684, Captain Allen was entertaining Christopher Rousby aboard the *Quaker* when Colonel George Talbot, Lord Baltimore's cousin, paid the party a visit.

What happened next is a matter of dispute. Rousby apparently invited Talbot to dinner, but Talbot declined, saying it was his fast day. After dinner, Allen and Talbot began arguing, primarily over the King's jurisdiction in Maryland, although one source reports that Talbot began kissing Allen. Allen rebuffed a number of these advances, claiming he was "no woman." Meanwhile, Rousby, who had left the boat, returned, and was prevented from leaving again by Talbot. "Rousby, you son of a whore, you dog," Talbot cried, then stabbed him to death with a dagger "newly prepared and sharpened" (Archives 1885b: 479; Fortescue 1964: 734–737).

Allen, fearing he had been the intended victim, immediately placed Talbot in irons and took Talbot to Virginia where he was put in prison in Gloucester. The Board of Trade and the King wanted Talbot sent to England for trial but, before that could happen, Talbot escaped from prison and made his way back to Maryland.

The escape appears to have been planned by Talbot's wife, Sarah, and some of his Irish friends in Maryland. Together, Mrs. Talbot, the friends, and several servants left Maryland in a shallop headed for the Rappahannock River in Virginia. Anchored in the

Rappahannock, the party idled there for a few days, buying supplies, collecting oysters, and drinking rum. One of the party departed and, a few days later, reappeared in a canoe with a stranger who Mrs. Talbot claimed was her cousin. She spoke in Gaelic with the newly arrived stranger, and the entire party soon set sail for Maryland, staying close to the colony's less populated Eastern Shore, apparently to avoid detection.

The stranger was clearly George Talbot and, once at home, he was forced to hide at friends' houses, disguised in a "short grey peruke [wig]," or at his own house, guarded by neighbors (Archives 1885b: 355–356). Tradition recounts that he fled into the remote woods and to Garrett Island at the mouth of the Susquehanna, where he lived off game brought to him by trained falcons (Semmes 1979: 176). Although the Maryland Council ordered Talbot's arrest, he remained at large for several months. He was finally apprehended in May, 1685, sent to Virginia, tried and sentenced to death in 1686. In 1687, he received the King's pardon and departed the colonies for Ireland.

The story of Christopher Rousby's murder and George Talbot's daring escape apparently survived through the early 19th century as an oral tradition, and Baltimore writer John Pendleton Kennedy heard the story as a child. When he discovered the yellowed records of the murder in an old building in Annapolis, Kennedy became even more intrigued by the story. In 1836, he made a visit to southern Maryland to collect ideas for a novel he was writing about early Maryland history. As luck would have it, Kennedy's boat landed at a farm he would later learn had been Christopher Rousby's plantation.

Southern Maryland Before the Civil War

Southern Maryland, a large peninsula of land on the state's western shore, was the first part of the state settled by English colonists. Since the 17th century, the region had been dominated by a plantation economy based on the production of tobacco. By the early 18th century, the tobacco planters had come to depend on an enslaved labor force. By the

19th century, African-American slaves with few economic or legal rights comprised more than half of the region's population. A small white elite class controlled most of the land, politics, and a good deal of this slave labor. The majority of free families, mostly white but some black, struggled to make ends meet from year to year. Most of these families owned very little or no land and no slaves.

Land and labor costs were high in the early to mid-19th century, and economic depressions following the Panics of 1819 and 1837 wiped out many farmers. Emigration was a serious problem in southern Maryland as western lands opened for settlement, and the region's population actually declined through the 19th century. Worse, the western tobacco and wheat farmers—many who had come from southern Maryland—were capturing an increasingly greater share of the market. Economic success in southern Maryland was possible, but only for a fairly small number of large, wealthy farmers.

For many travelers to southern Maryland during this period, the region was clearly a place ignored by progress. These visitors saw a landscape impoverished by economic and political isolation. "Nothing," one commentator wrote, "can present to the eye a more dreary and miserable aspect, than the condition of most parts of the lower counties on the western shore of Maryland." Another wrote of houses "dark and dingy—windows broken—palings broken down—gardens demolished." "Just in my eye," wrote a third, "are two tenements, deserted." The cause of all this misfortune? The "cultivation of tobacco as a sole and entire crop" (King 1994).

Orphan's Court records provide additional evidence of the points of view of the people who lived in southern Maryland. These valuations, made to protect the estates of minor children, tend to confirm a landscape of shifting fields and wooden buildings, many in poor condition. Forty to fifty percent of the dwellings listed between 1801 and 1840 were described as "in bad repair." Nearly 20% of these houses were of log construction and measured an average of 569 ft² (173 m²). At least one-third of the outbuildings recorded during the same period were described as in bad condition (Ranzetta 1997: 8–9).

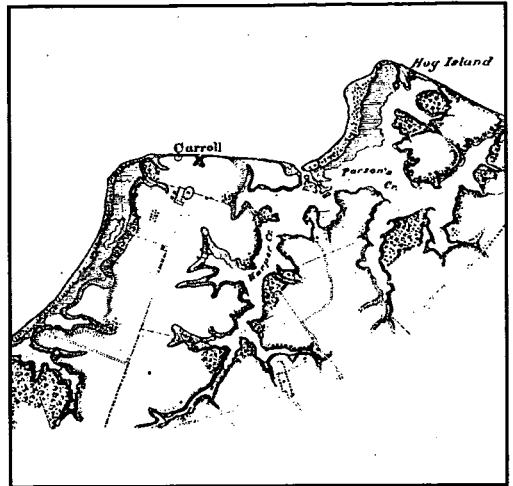


Figure 2. 1848 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map showing fields, marsh, woodlands, buildings, roads, and fencing at Susquehanna. The tree-lined avenue approaches the site from the South: a portion of this avenue has worn from the map.

Susquehanna Farm

Henry J. Carroll inherited Susquehanna shortly before 1842, becoming the fifth generation of his family to live on the property. By the mid-19th century, the Susquehanna plantation consisted of approximately 700 acres of level, prime agricultural land at the mouth of the Patuxent River. An 1848 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map indicates that much of the land was cleared and probably under cultivation in the 1840s and 1850s (FIG. 2). Buffer stands of trees between the fields and waterways certainly helped preserve the farm's rich soils and protect the creeks. Carroll probably owned woodlands nearby to provide his plantation with firewood, fencing, and lumber.

In 1849, Carroll grew corn and wheat and, in 1859, he grew corn, wheat, and tobacco. He also grew oats and hay, probably for farm consumption, and he kept comparatively large numbers of horses, cattle, oxen, sheep, and pigs. Between 1849 and 1859, Carroll dramatically increased farm production without improving any additional land, suggesting his farming practices were influenced by the ideas and innovations of the agricultural reform movement (King 1994: 287). At his death in 1883, Carroll's probate inventory contained

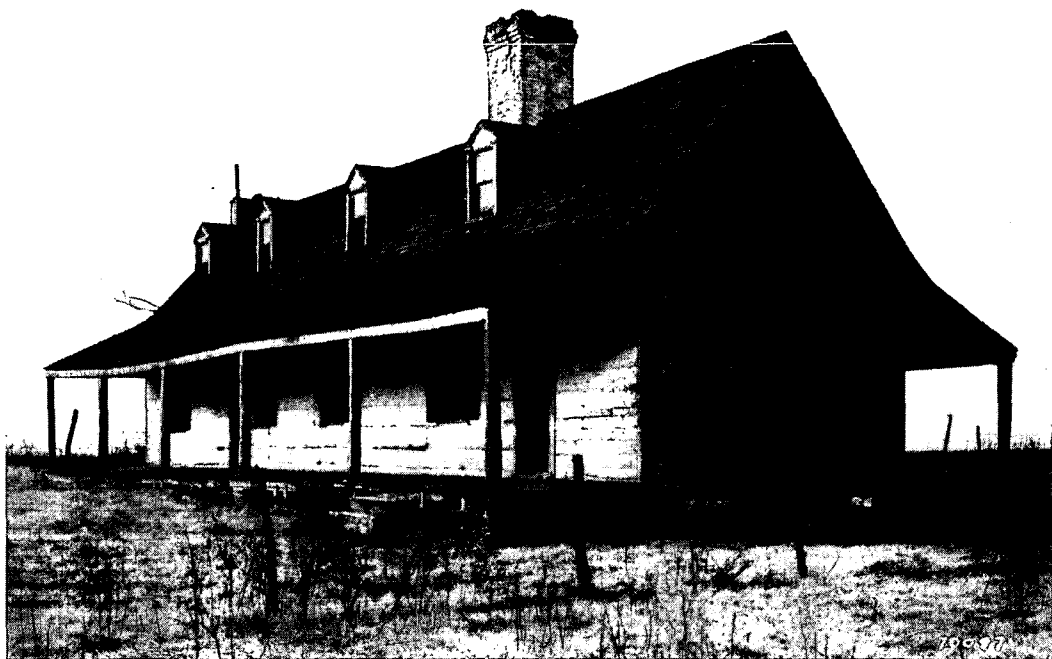


Figure 3. The principal dwelling at Susquehanna as it appeared in 1941 (Courtesy of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village).

specialty plows and other similar equipment advertised in the agricultural journals. Carroll no doubt paid close attention to issues of enclosure, soil fertility, and other farm management topics (King 1994: 287).

The population at Susquehanna varied little between 1842 and 1861, consisting of Carroll family members and African-American slaves. On the eve of the Civil War, Carroll had 65 slaves living at the farm, probably in cabins and duplexes hidden among the trees along the bluffs of Harper's Creek. Carroll lived with his wife and six children at the plantation's principal dwelling (FIG. 3), and a female schoolteacher also appears to have resided with the Carrolls. Carroll probably had at least one overseer living on his property, but it is impossible to reconstruct who this individual might have been from census records.

Archaeological and documentary study of the Susquehanna property suggests that Henry Carroll maintained a well-ordered landscape at his plantation. He was sensitive to issues of land management and appears to

have suffered little of the erosion plaguing other farmers in 19th-century, southern Maryland. Slave dwellings were hidden out of view, while Carroll's dwelling was prominently displayed at the center of the farm. Yet, access to Carroll's house was restricted to a long, straight, tree-lined avenue nearly two miles in length, and the dwelling itself was

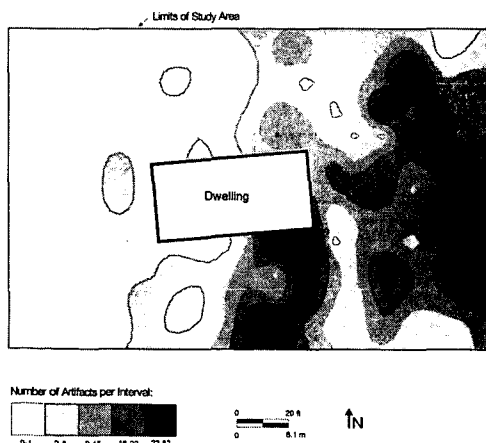


Figure 4. Distribution of oyster shell, Susquehanna.

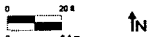
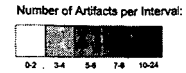
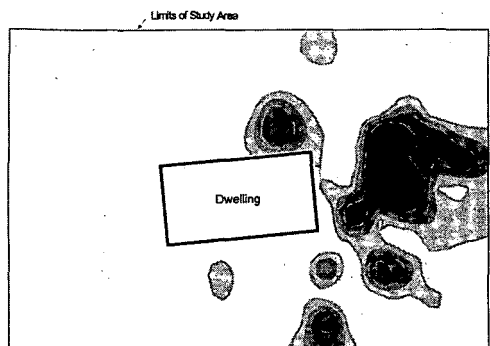


Figure 5. Distribution of animal bone, Susquehanna, enclosed within an unusual elliptical fence. Distributions of shell, bone, and 19th-century ceramics indicate the yard surrounding the dwelling was divided into a service end and a formal end. The service end was located off the kitchen with associated domestic outbuildings. The formal end was situated off the parlor with virtually no evidence of domestic activities in the associated soils (FIGS. 4-7).

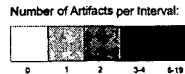
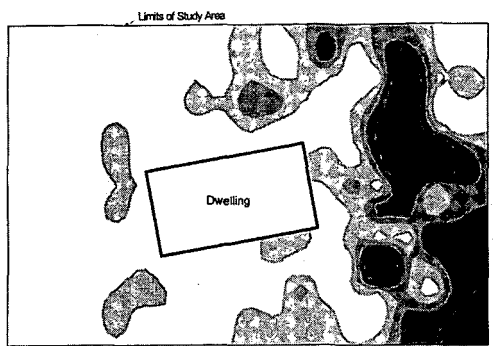
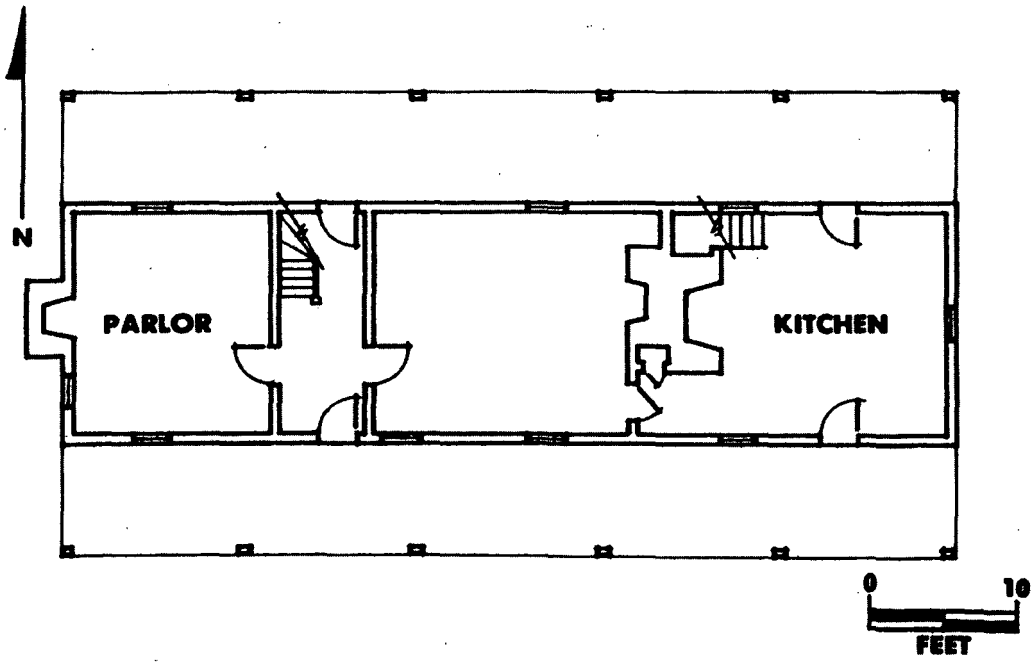


Figure 6. Distribution of 19th-century ceramics, Susquehanna.

It was precisely the orderliness of this landscape that made one archaeological feature especially intriguing. Adjacent to the dwelling's formal parlor end, hundreds of fragments of brick were encountered during archaeological testing. These fragments were initially believed to have been left over from the 1941 dismantling and removal of the main

Figure 7. Plan of the Susquehanna house.



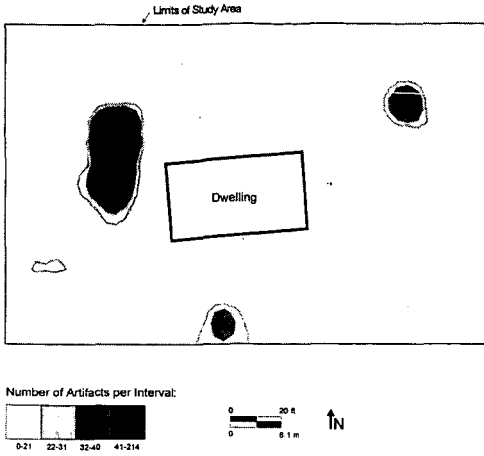
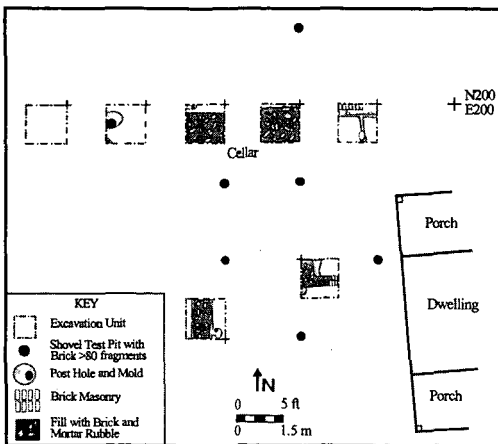


Figure 8. Distribution of brick, Susquehanna.

house to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn (FIG. 8).² Careful study of the soil stratigraphy, however, indicated that the brick concentrations were located below 1941 soil levels, thus pre-dating the 1941 move. Subsequently, traces of a buried brick foundation and cellar were revealed in this part of the dwelling yard (FIG. 9). Enough of the foundation was exposed to conclude that it was probably an earlier dwelling built sometime in the second half of the 18th century. The 1798 Federal Direct Tax Assessment for St. Mary's County describes a dwelling at Susquehanna measuring 28 by 32 feet, "one story of wood, in bad repair." The foundation's measurements approximated the dimensions described in the tax assessment, and the width of the founda-

Figure 9. Ruin foundations at Susquehanna.



tion—about one and a half feet—would have easily supported a one-story frame building. The earlier foundation was approximately 10ft west of and parallel to the foundation of the later Carroll house.

The location of the building mentioned in the 1798 Tax Assessment had always been a mystery, and the discovery of the foundation as well as a scattering of 18th-century artifacts indicated that Henry Carroll's house obviously replaced an earlier building in the same vicinity. The cellar fill of the earlier dwelling was subsequently sampled in an effort to determine when that building was abandoned and its cellar filled. The hope was that the materials in the cellar might pin down the date of construction of Carroll's 19th-century house more precisely. Dendrochronology and documentary evidence had already narrowed the construction date of Carroll's house to between 1820 and 1836.

The fill excavated from the cellar was a brown loam densely packed with brick and mortar fragments—precisely the kind of material one would expect from the demolition of a building. But the datable artifacts contained within the fill were not from the second quarter of the 19th century as anticipated. Instead, wire nails, fragments of clear bottle glass, and a round bottom ginger ale bottle base indicated that the cellar had not been filled until the 1880s and possibly later. This posed a serious interpretive problem concerning the relationship of the 19th-century building and the older, 18th-century dwelling.

There was virtually no evidence to suggest that the 18th-century building remained standing after the newer dwelling was built, and plenty of indirect evidence to suggest that it did not remain in use through the 19th century. For example, there is no evidence in the fabric of the surviving building in Dearborn to indicate the two structures were ever connected, nor were the foundations integrated in any way. The complete absence of wrought

² In 1941, the Susquehanna house was moved to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan when the United States of America acquired the property and surrounding farms for a new naval aviation testing facility. Henry Ford was no doubt aware of the story of Christopher Rousby's murder and wanted the house for his museum of Americana.

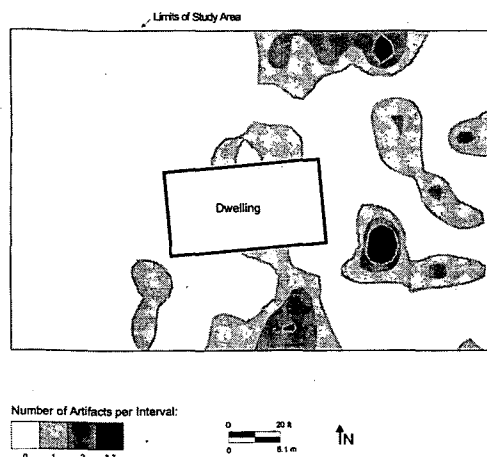


Figure 10. Distribution of wrought nails, Susquehanna.

nails suggests that the earlier dwelling's frame structure had been removed from the site rather than left to rot in place (FIG. 10). Most importantly, none of the people interviewed about Susquehanna since the 1940s mentioned a building adjacent to the 19th-century building, although one person recalled "bricks and other signs of ruin" in the yard. The archaeological evidence clearly indicated that the cellar hole and at least some foundation walls did indeed remain visible in the landscape throughout the 19th century. Not until the century's end was the cellar filled and the brick foundations removed.

For at least a year after the discovery of this earlier building and its persistence as a ruin in the landscape, I mulled over what seemed incongruent: the presence of an abandoned, derelict, and ruined structure in an otherwise highly ordered landscape. I kept trying to find some reasonable interpretation for a feature I perceived as an unkempt loose end, completely out of character for a planter like Henry Carroll. Perhaps the cellar hole had served as a kind of trash dump during the 19th century, but the absence of early and mid-19th-century domestic artifacts suggests the ruin was kept clean throughout the century. Surely Henry Carroll with his 65 slaves had the resources to remove the ruin and 'clean' up the yard.

Even more interesting, the removal and burial of the ruin in the yard in the late 19th century coincided with a major change in

ownership. Susquehanna, which had been in the same family since the 17th century, passed into the hands of a series of absentee landlords beginning in 1883. The house was now occupied by tenant families who continued to farm the land. The tenants appear to have had no need of a formal houseyard, nor did they have the labor to maintain it. Instead, the yard surrounding Susquehanna was plowed and planted within 10ft of the dwelling. The ruined cellar was filled and the foundation removed to make way for this new arrangement. The new tenant family at Susquehanna found the resources to remove the ruin in order to maximize farm production. Why, then, had Carroll allowed the ruin to persist?

In an earlier analysis of the ruin in the Susquehanna yard, I suggested that uncertainty in the future on the part of wealthy southern Maryland farmers may have encouraged them to use ruins to legitimize an economic and social system increasingly under attack. At Susquehanna, the ruin may have signified one family's ownership of the land for nearly 200 years, linking the Carrolls to their Rousby ancestor.³ I also suggested that the Susquehanna ruin and several others in southern Maryland may have been used to represent struggles between Catholics and Protestants and the religious tension that existed in antebellum Maryland (King 1996: 268–269).

Subsequently, I discovered a short story by Baltimore writer John Pendleton Kennedy that described the ruin at Susquehanna. This short story was about the murder of Christopher Rousby and Kennedy's search for the documentary and physical traces of Rousby's life and murder. On other business, Kennedy had come to the Susquehanna plantation in the spring of 1836, spending an entire day exploring the landscape in his search for the evidence of history. Kennedy's short narrative, published in a number of places on the eve of the Civil War, indicated that the Carrolls were indeed maintaining a ruin in their

³ The ruin in the Susquehanna yard had been a dwelling built c. 1775 and was not the home of Christopher Rousby. Whether the Carrolls knew this in the mid-19th century is unknown. By the early 20th century, most people believed that Rousby had built and occupied the dwelling now in Dearborn, although that structure was not built until the second quarter of the 19th century.



Figure 11. John Pendleton Kennedy (Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society)

dwelling yard. "The [Susquehanna] dwelling house," wrote Kennedy,

was a comfortable wooden building of the style and character of the present day, with all the appurtenances proper to a convenient and pleasant country homestead. Immediately in its neighborhood—so near that it might be said to be almost within the curtilage of the dwelling—stood an old brick ruin of what had apparently been a substantial mansion house. Such a monument of the past as this, of course, could not escape our spe-

cial attention, and, upon inquiry, we were told that it was once, a long time ago, the family home of the Rousby's, the ancestors of the present occupants of the estate.

Kennedy's story confirmed the archaeological interpretation of the Susquehanna ruin, but the story was even more important for reinterpreting the meaning of this feature. My earlier understanding of the ruin concerned its power to legitimize authority at a local level. The popularity of the Kennedy story, however, showed how a local meaning was reconfigured into a regional one by this visitor to southern Maryland. Perhaps more important,

the meaning Kennedy identified for the Susquehanna ruin was not about power and the right to rule. Rather, Kennedy remade this region as a place in the past.

John Pendleton Kennedy and A Legend of Maryland

John Pendleton Kennedy was a well-known writer from Baltimore, producing three novels, several shorter essays, and numerous orations throughout his career (FIG. 11). He was friendly with James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and William Gilmore Simms. He is also credited with helping Edgar Allan Poe secure a job with the *Southern Literary Messenger*. While Kennedy's writings are little known today, he was both well known and well regarded as a writer in antebellum America (Jackson 1934; Wimsatt 1985). Kennedy was also a tireless promoter of commercial and manufacturing interests in Baltimore. He served as one of the directors of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and argued passionately that the Baltimore and Ohio "must be completed, *no matter at what cost*" (emphasis original). He was a shareholder in his father-in-law's large cotton mill in Ellicott City. A lawyer by training, Kennedy served in the Maryland House of Delegates and later in the United States House of Representatives (Bohner 1961; Diltz 1993).

Kennedy first read his narrative of Rousby's murder at a meeting in Baltimore of the Horticultural Society (1856), later publishing it in the *Baltimore Patriot* (1857), the *Southern Literary Messenger* (1857), and the *Atlantic Monthly* (1860). He began the story by recounting the tale often heard in his childhood about Talbot's Cave, where a nobleman long ago, having committed some awful crime, was forced to hide to avoid capture. After that, Kennedy happened upon small clues to the mystery of Talbot's Cave. A book purchased at an auction contained a marginal reference to a Colonel George Talbot, noting he had murdered Christopher Rousby, the King's Tax Collector, in a boat anchored at the mouth of the Patuxent. A trip to St. Mary's County in 1836 led Kennedy almost by accident to Susquehanna, "the family home of the Rousby's," as well as to the cemetery con-

taining Christopher Rousby's grave. Finally, Kennedy's discovery in Annapolis of the minutes of the Maryland Provincial Council documented the Council's investigation of Rousby's murder and Talbot's subsequent escape.

Although later research has established that Colonel George Talbot was a hot-headed man sometimes lacking in judgment (Johnston 1881: 111; Andrews 1929: 170), Talbot, not Rousby, is clearly the hero in Kennedy's narrative. For Kennedy, Talbot represented a man of civilized gentility forced to flee into the wilderness for a crime that is almost forgivable. This was a "man of condition, a gentleman of rank," whose crime "could scarcely have been a mean felony, perpetrated for gain, but more likely [for] some act of passion."

Parliament, it seems, "had passed an act for levying certain duties on the trade of the colonies," and the collectors of this tax, including Rousby, were "bitter and relentless" enemies of Lord Baltimore's government. As a consequence, "much ill-will" developed between the "collectors and the people." On the night of his murder, Kennedy writes, Rousby was cavorting aboard the *Quaker* with its captain, insulting Lord Baltimore and generally being disrespectful of the Maryland government. Talbot went on board the *Quaker*, quarreled with the two men, and then attempted to leave. When Rousby and the boat's captain prevented him from doing so, "the parties having already come from words to blows, Talbot drew his dagger and stabbed Rousby to the heart."

In an earlier novel, *Rob of the Bowl: A Legend of St. Inigoes*, Kennedy (1838) wrote in the preface that the founding of Maryland was both a religious and civil journey into the wilderness. These "bold cavalier[s]" with their "deep unconquerable faith of religion, and the impassioned...Anglo-Saxon devotion to liberty" overcame hardships in an epic struggle that ultimately transformed the American wilderness. Much of that struggle involved religious and political conflicts and intrigues between the colonists rather than with their Native American neighbors. In *Rob of the Bowl*, the Calverts and their supporters are pitted against scheming, but fictional, colonists intent on seizing political power in

Maryland. The Calverts are men of wealth, but more importantly they are civil, benevolent, and honest leaders while their opponents are interested only in increasing their own wealth. "A Legend of Maryland" preserves that tension, but deals with real characters, not fictional ones. In this story, the bold cavalier again finds himself in a struggle with one of his own countrymen. In the cavalier's attempt to defend the rightness and justness of Baltimore's government, he is forced to kill the Tax Collector, a boorish man given to upsetting the colony's population. Even the government of Virginia appears an enemy of the Calvert government and, once again, the wilderness affords the cavalier his only protection.

Rousby, if we accept Kennedy's interpretation, may not have deserved to die, yet he behaved in such an insulting and rude manner that he had only himself to blame for his death. He collected an unpopular tax and generally disturbed the peace of the province. He was clearly of lesser rank than the men of Baltimore's government, whose rule Kennedy does not question. Rousby also sought to line his own pockets with material wealth, short-changing Baltimore's government. His commitment to service was nonexistent, and Kennedy couched it all in a recognizable American theme: an unfair English tax.

Kennedy's story might be understood in any number of ways as a product of mid-19th-century American culture. The series of short stories about the Rousby murder were published when sectional tensions were high, but I do not believe that sectionalism is Kennedy's primary theme here. Kennedy was pro-slavery, but he also strongly opposed southern secession. Instead, I believe that Kennedy's story is best understood to concern the profound sense of loss felt by 19th-century Americans in a rapidly industrializing and politically divided society. "Commerce," wrote Kennedy (1860: 31), "is a most ruthless contemner [*sic*] of all romance, and never hesitates between a speculation of profit and a speculation of history." Kennedy suggests that, to recover some of what is lost, one needs to travel to the scene where time melds with

geography and a place might be said to be past. There, in the landscape, "an astute antiquarian eye" might see, touch, and experience the landscape and its relics as both witnesses to and remnants of a lost time.

Like many other travelers to southern Maryland, Kennedy saw ruins. Not only did Kennedy see the ruin at Susquehanna, he also visited the nearby ruin of Lord Baltimore's house and the old State House ruin in St. Mary's City.⁴ Kennedy's representations of these ruins and their surrounding landscapes, however, were strikingly different than the "ruined" landscapes represented by the agricultural reformers. While the reformers saw waste, desolation, abandonment, and a lack of progress, Kennedy saw the southern Maryland landscapes as a kind of "place in time."

At Susquehanna, Kennedy read the landscape as a series of ancient landmarks, of relics: "the visible lines of an old foundation," "an old brick ruin," the "rustic tombs." The Carrolls, who resided at Susquehanna, are only briefly acknowledged and never introduced or otherwise seen in the narrative; the only local resident presented in Kennedy's story is "an old negro who seemed to have a fair claim... to be regarded both as the Solomon and Methuselah of the plantation." The elderly black man considered himself an "aristocrat" because of the "pedigree and history of his master's family," and Kennedy portrayed him as a kind of timeless figure in the landscape. Kennedy also represented the old man, almost certainly a slave, with a contempt that suggests his belief in the inferiority of blacks and the value of slavery as a form of social control.

After visiting the ruins of Lord Baltimore's 17th-century dwelling and the ruin located adjacent to the Susquehanna house, Kennedy's party proceeded to the banks of Harper's

⁴ The ruins of Lord Baltimore's house at Mattapani also appear to have been carefully preserved and imbued with meaning during this period. The ruin may have been enclosed in the mid-19th century, and 19th-century tablewares suggest that people other than Kennedy visited the ruins.

Creek, where "a graveyard...had been preserved...from a very early period." There, "in a quiet, sequestered nook," they were observing "a few simple tombstones" when the guide cried, "I have got one tombstone yet to show you, as soon as I clear it off...: it belongs to old Master Rousby, who was stabbed [stabbed] aboard ship, and is, besides that, the grandest tombstone here."

As the elderly man scraped the sod and vegetation from the tombstone, "our group," Kennedy mused,

would have made a fine artistic study. There was this quiet landscape around us garnished with the beauty of May; there were the rustic tombs, the old negro, ...bending his aged figure over the broad, carved stone, and scraping from it the grass which had not been disturbed perhaps for a quarter century; and there was our own party, looking on with eager interest, as the inscription every moment became legible.

Kennedy's description of the Susquehanna landscape reconfigured this modern, reformed southern Maryland plantation as a place in past time. In general, Kennedy saw romantic ruins, not ruinous waste, in the landscape. At Susquehanna, he completely ignored the modern farming practices of the Carrolls. Instead, the tombstones; the elderly, "timeless" black man; and the walk of pilgrimage served to remake Susquehanna and, by extension, all of southern Maryland, into an "earlier" place. Kennedy barely acknowledges the Carrolls and makes no mention of the other laboring African-American residents, and he says nothing about the farm and its management. For Kennedy, Susquehanna was a place of pilgrimage, a place to recover what elsewhere was lost. What the reformers saw as wasteful, ruined landscapes in southern Maryland (as well as in many of the tobacco-growing regions of Virginia), Kennedy saw as relics of the founding of Maryland, tangible evidence giving unmediated access to the past (Lowenthal 1979). For Kennedy and his

readers, Susquehanna came to represent Maryland's past.

Epilogue

A central focus of my essay has been to understand the meaning[s] of the ruin in the 19th-century Susquehanna yard. To achieve that goal, I quickly discovered that "artifacts are not enough," and that documentary sources, including literature, provide a far richer understanding of the 19th-century Susquehanna landscape. Too often, archaeologists shun literary works and even use traditional kinds of documents in rather limited ways. These observations are hardly new or original: for years, Mary Beaudry (1988) has urged archaeologists to explore new and different ways for analyzing documents that might produce greater anthropological and historical understanding of past cultures.

Too often, archaeology has been criticized as an expensive way to discover what we already know. Usually this criticism is more unfair than it is true, but I have no doubt that, properly contextualized, even the most ordinary site might yield strikingly new insights. If we agree that our purpose is the study of past culture, not just artifacts, we must expand our studies to include literature, paintings, and oral history. We may not be experts in art history, or in literary criticism, or in documentary analysis, but we have an obligation to draw on these sources in ways that enhance our archaeological interpretations.

A strange new sensibility was developing in the 19th century—a sensibility forged by the phenomenon of a conflated time and space. This sensibility was used to relocate places seemingly ignored by progress along a temporal continuum. It helped define and explain the backwardness of so-called traditional cultures in the United States as well as in other strange places of the world. This sensibility still influences preservation activities today and, as archaeologists draw boundaries of significance around their sites, we would do well to consider the political, social, and cultural

implications of those lines and how we remake sites into places in the past. How are the lines we inscribe around sites used to generate narratives of loss, of displacement, and of progress? The ongoing archaeological discussion of 19th-century farmstead sites suggests that our efforts are not always, if ever, transparent, and John Pendleton Kennedy offers potentially valuable lessons for considering archaeological uses of the past.

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